

Jamaica Planning Commission (JPC)  
Draft Meeting Minutes - Regular Meeting  
November 7, 2022  
Jamaica Town Offices, 28 Town Office Road  
Jamaica VT 05343

Commissioners present: Bryan Zieroff, Chris Robbins, Charlie Peck, Patrick McQuillan  
Public present: Bob Rolen, Alionq Manvae

The meeting was called to order at 7:00 p.m.

1. No additions to the agenda.
2. The October 17, 2022 draft meeting minutes were approved as written, by unanimous vote.
3. Bryan reported that there are no new issues. The Wastewater disposal feasibility study project remains on track.
4. Charlie provided a summary of information about the recent acquisition of a 2,300 acre parcel of forestland on Glebe Mountain in the towns of Windham and Londonderry by the Silvio O. Conte National Wildlife Refuge (United States Fish and Wildlife Service). The parcel contains headwaters of the West, Willians and Saxtons River watersheds, among other important environmental assets, including the headwaters of Cobb and Turkey Mountain brooks, which flow into Jamaica.

The Conte Refuge encompasses the entire Connecticut River watershed, and the West River basin, including most of the land in Jamaica, is one of their designated special focus areas. The Refuge is authorized to purchase, when and if federal funds are available, private parcels within its boundaries for permanent conservation, protection and management by the USFWS.

Charlie stated that this land conservation mechanism and opportunity is important for Jamaica, and is related to the need to re-examine and update implementation strategies for protecting Jamaica's designated Conservation land use districts, during the next Town Plan update.

5. Chris reported that DVfiber has published its annual report to the Communication Union District's (CUD) Selectboards. The draft copy has been circulated to Planning Commission and Selectboard members. The report covers the CUD's activities for the past year. For the most part these were covered in the presentation made to the Selectboard that is available on the town website under the DVfiber quick link. The new item in the report is the announcement of establishing a beta test group in Readsboro. Beginning in December, beta users will be connected to the segment of the southern ring now under construction. Besides being able to work out any startup problems that may occur before major expenditures of construction funds are made; we expect to get valuable feedback from this group of test users that will be used in marketing.

Chris further reported that the CUD's Readiness Task Force has been working with the Equal Access to Broadband (EAB) group with the goal of entering into a contract for the EAB to manage DVFiber's subsidy of low income families service fees and any non-standard connection costs. This is inherently a social service distinct from the CUD's construction, marketing, and subscriber servicing activities which the EAB

is organized to perform. Their goal is to provide this service state wide: They currently provide this service to ECfiber, and CVfiber is also consider contracting with them. The EAB will train and direct local “navigators”, volunteers that will work with potential subsidy recipients to qualify for the FCC’s Affordable Connection Plan (ACP) and administer any additional subsidies necessary from charitable donations made to DVfiber.

The Public Service Department’s recent press release acknowledged towns that have made donations to their CUD’s from ARPA town funds. These donations will be matched up to a limit of \$200,000. Jamaica was among the first three towns in DVfiber’s service area, and among the first in the state, to contribute. The PSD is extending this program to June of 2023 with matches up to \$100,000 for contributions from other towns in Vermont. These funds and their match will be used to offset connection costs beyond the free standard connections for ACP recipients.

6. Charlie suggested that agenda item 7 be taken up before item 6, which was agreed to. Bob Rolen gave an update on his development plans for his Jamaica property, the former Craven farm in East Jamaica. He has retained an engineering firm to assist with wastewater disposal permitting for two new buildings with a total planned occupancy of 20 persons. He inquired if DVFiber can provide help with connection costs for providing service to low and moderate income residents at his planned development, as the distance to the closest existing utility pole is substantial and costs of building a new service line are expected to be high. Chris replied that he will look into this. Bob also inquired about obtaining permission to repair a section of town legal trail 17, which provides access to his development site. It was recommended that he contact the Road Commissioner, Greg Meulemans.

7. Under “other business”, Charlie suggested that the JPC might be able to conduct its necessary business, and continue to work effectively, with only one regular meeting per month. There was some discussion of this, and general agreement that the suggestion is feasible. The issue will be placed on the next meeting agenda for discussion and action. Bryan will inform the Selectboard and seek their input.

There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned.